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Siddha Medicine As Described In Siddhar Literature

G. Sivapalan

Introduction

The poems of the siddhars are a feast to the poets and the populace. Just like the educated person, the common man too enjoys singing these verses with true emotion or enjoys listening to those who do so. This is because these verses possess literary qualities that win the hearts of the people from various literary and social levels. Generally those with sufficient knowledge of science are not well-versed in literature; neither are those with literary tendencies proficient in science. But the siddhars seem to be exceptions to this general rule. They have used literature as a vehicle to convey scientific truths to the common man. They deal with yoga, astronomy, geography, botany, mathematics, medicine, alchemy, manthiram and other such fields of knowledge. Their literature dealing with such variety of topics which help to cultivate and develop the inner and outer aspects of human life, serve as concrete proof of their vast knowledge.

Today, the songs of the siddhars are available as anthologies of single poems as the compilation called Nyanak Kovai. Of these, the anthologies of single poems are more in number. But the Nyanak Kovai compilations are considered to have greater literary merit. There are many such anthologies of the songs of the siddhars have been published. Of them, the Patinen Siddhargal Periya Nyanak Kovai (PNK) edited by V. Saravanamutti Pillai and published by Irattina Nayakar Sons have been used as the basic of this study.

Aim of this study

The aim of this article is to examine and to explain the subject of siddha medicine as described in siddhar literature.

Siddha Medicine

The medical knowledge and practice of the siddhars has developed separately as the system of siddha medicine. They were well-versed in the art of curing illnesses by using the bounties of nature like trees, plants and creepers. They utilized every part of these vegetation like their root, bark, leaf, flower, unripe fruit, fruit and seeds. Besides these different metals and metallic fluids like mercury also served as important ingredients in their medicines (Centamilum Cittamaruttuvamurum 1998:315). The siddhars who sought to cure illnesses by first knowing about their root cause or causes of each of the illnesses also knew how to obtain knowledge of yogam and a firm mind.

The works of the siddhars bear testimony to the fact that they possessed vast knowledge in a variety of fields. But of all these, their eminence in the field of medicine seems to stand out most. The reason may be that it is a branch of knowledge that is indispensable to every human being on earth. "Even though they do not know how to live without illnesses, every one desires a healthy, happy life..."
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